

Congregational Accompaniment Project for Asylum Seekers

Handbook for Congregations



“

I want to say a very big thanks to this program for all that they have done for us. They gave us food, housing, clothes, and even transportation. Words alone can't describe how grateful we are. Many many thanks to all the sponsors, fundraisers, and everyone involved in this project. Thanks so much, we are indeed very grateful.

”

- Chris, asylum-seeker from Nigeria

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Introduction

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee ([UUSC](#)) is a nonprofit, nonsectarian organization advancing human rights together with an international community of grassroots partners and advocates. The organization's work is rooted in the [seven Principles](#) of Unitarian Universalism. UUSC was founded to assist refugees escaping Nazi persecution.

Today, UUSC's Congregational Accompaniment Project for Asylum Seekers ([CAPAS](#)) continues that proud history by helping congregations walk in solidarity with asylum seekers. The CAPAS program offers congregations:

- guidance through the decision to become hosts or sponsors;
- preparation for teams to welcome and care for guests;
- guest pairing, in collaboration with partner organizations;
- support while in solidarity with people seeking to obtain legal asylum;
- regular connection with other CAPAS congregations around the country;
- shorter-term opportunities to assist families who have been recently reunited after separation at the border
- practical trainings on accompaniment work; and
- advocacy opportunities for widening engagement in immigrant justice issues.



This handbook provides an overview of the asylum-seeker accompaniment process, information to help congregations discern whether the program fits within their social justice goals, and best practices and resources drawn from the community of accompaniment congregations. In addition, you will find reflections and meditations. We hope these will be a reminder that hospitality, solidarity, and resistance to injustice are grounded in our faith. While the materials reflect our Unitarian Universalist grounding, we hope they will be relevant to congregations of any faith tradition.

To hear firsthand from participating congregations and asylum-seekers about the impact of the program, watch [UUSC's CAPAS video](#). To set up a time to talk with CAPAS staff about how to get involved, please fill out the intake form found [here](#).

Program History

Under the leadership of retired UU minister, Rev. Dottie Mathews, CAPAS grew out of a collaboration among several organizations, including [Freedom for Immigrants](#), [Showing Up for Racial Justice \(SURJ\)](#), [Pueblo Sin Fronteras](#), [Love Resists](#), [Innovation Law Lab](#), and the [UU College of Social Justice](#). Most recently, CAPAS has become a program of UUSC to support more congregations working in solidarity with people seeking asylum.

The program design and materials shared here draw on those created and compiled by the organizations named above, as well as others. We are deeply grateful for all of the individuals who have offered their time, insight, and commitment to furthering this justice work.

no one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark
you only run for the border
when you see the whole city
running as well...
you only leave home
when home won't let you stay...

-- from "Home" by Warsan Shire

Listen to her read the full poem:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nI9D92Xiygo>

Introduction to UUSC

UUSC's work began in 1939 when Rev. Waitstill and Martha Sharp took an extraordinary risk and leap of faith, helping refugees escape Nazi persecution in Europe. Just weeks after their arrival in Czechoslovakia, the couple watched Hitler's troops march into Prague. They were shadowed by Gestapo agents. Their offices were ransacked. They had to burn files to protect refugees' identities. The young couple narrowly escaped arrest by returning home in August. Inspired by Rev. Waitstill and Martha Sharp's

courageous mission, the Unitarian Services Committee, the precursor to UUSC, was established in 1940 to continue and formalize humanitarian service. The flaming chalice, symbol of our faith to this day, was created for the USC by Hans Deutsch, a Jewish Austrian refugee and artist. For more than 80 years, UUSC has maintained a steadfast presence on the frontlines of social justice movements around the globe. Assisting displaced peoples has always been at the heart of our mission.



Accompaniment as a Response to Injustice

People both within and beyond migrant communities are resisting the ongoing immigration injustice in our country. People of faith are in solidarity with immigrants, demonstrating the interconnected web of life, and upholding the worth and dignity of all. Volunteers have joined border organizations to offer legal information and to staff the short-term shelters. Neighbors and friends have created networks to accompany migrants to immigration hearings, legal and medical appointments, and check-ins with ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement). Interfaith groups are providing rides, translation services, and transitional housing. Community

groups are meeting migrants at bus stations with supplies for their journey while others help them find work. No part of this work is too small.

In all forms, accompaniment is an invitation to witness, to listen, and to show up. It is a practice of being human together in the face of dehumanizing systems and circumstances. Accompaniment is an opportunity to build relationships with those who are most impacted. Many people who engage in accompaniment become deeply transformed and grow more committed to disrupting harmful systems and acting for a more liberated future for all.

Ways for Congregations to Participate in CAPAS

Congregations are especially well-suited to provide accompaniment to asylum-seekers. CAPAS offers multiple ways for congregations to offer much needed solidarity. We can work with you to figure out the best role for your congregation at this time. The current options include:

- 1 Host congregations** provide a significant level of support to asylum-seekers for 1-2 years as they lay foundations and build connections in their new communities. This support often includes housing, a living stipend, legal representation, medical/therapeutic care, ESL support, education/job training, transportation, and ties to other community programs. Congregations work in partnership with their guests throughout this part of their journey.
- 2 Funding partner** congregations are matched with a host congregation to provide much needed funds to support their solidarity work. Funding partners receive regular updates and communications from the host congregation.
- 3 Solidarity supporters** are congregations or individuals who are placed on a list to receive requests for funding or other support. These requests may include an unexpected funding need of a host congregation or support for a recently reunified family.
- 4 Immigration justice advocates** include congregations or individuals who want to take action to support immigrant justice policy change.

Much of this handbook will focus on the process to become a CAPAS host congregation, but we would love to talk with you about serving in another role.



Process to Become a Host Congregation

This is the outline of the process you can expect. Each stage deserves its due time, so the entire process may be lengthy. In the words of Steven Covey, we encourage congregations to “move at the speed of trust.”

- 1** • Discernment: developing a careful and well-informed understanding of what it means to host an asylum-seeker and deciding whether to do so.
- 2** • Readiness conversations: by which we ensure that the host home as well as the support team are ready to move forward. As part of this process a member of our CAPAS team will have at least one conversation with the support team – including the congregation’s minister – and a separate conversation with the host family/persons.
- 3** • Matching process: when CAPAS contacts partner organizations and immigration lawyers currently in touch with the asylum-seeker(s). All parties will consider location and circumstances to make the best possible match for the asylum-seeker(s) and the congregation.
- 4** • Preparing for incoming guest(s), including budgets/fundraising: guiding the support team, supporting your guest in detention, and making transportation arrangements.
- 5** • Welcome and settling in: with best practices and advice on how to best support your guest(s) in the early weeks.
- 6** • As time goes on: things to keep in mind as you help your guest(s) set goals and make ties in the community.
- 7** • Developing a transition plan with your guest(s): to prepare for eventual transition out of your program.
- 8** • Ongoing CAPAS support and coaching: which we offer throughout your congregation’s sponsorship. This includes group calls, occasional webinars, and support resources.

At every stage of the process, we strongly encourage you to ground yourselves in simple spiritual practices that remind your group that solidarity is based on your values and rooted in your faith. It can be very helpful to begin all of your meetings with a meditation, prayer, reading, or song that offers centering and inspiration. Throughout this handbook, we offer suggested prayers and meditations, but please feel free to bring in your own! Some groups also invite a brief check-in to allow time for feelings to be expressed openly – including doubt or anxiety, shame for some mistake we’ve made, or frustration at the stickiness of the process.

Discernment

Participation in the CAPAS program often begins with a small group of interested congregants. The discernment process may include:



Contacting the CAPAS program



Building your core team



Identifying the housing host(s)



Reading the CAPAS handbook



Discussing the discernment questions

For most UU congregations, it isn't necessary to begin by actively involving the entire congregation in the discernment process. Bring the congregation along through frequent updates and perhaps a congregational vote, depending on what you're asking of the overall community.

Contact CAPAS and build your team

[Contact the CAPAS program](#) to express interest in hosting an asylum-seeker, as early in the discernment process as you'd like. We'll ask you to pull together a committed core team composed of the minister and members of the congregation willing to make a commitment of at least a year of involvement with this project. This group will include the person willing to serve as a housing host (unless you plan to house the asylum-seeker in their own accommodations). If it is difficult to find one host who can commit for a full year, identify two hosts who can commit for six months each. We also suggest designating a team lead. The minister does not have to remain on the team for the whole year, but should be actively involved in the discernment process.

Read the handbook and discuss these questions

The next step is to ensure that everyone on the team has read this handbook. We suggest that the team then answer the following discernment questions as a group.

1 *What are the values of our faith that point us toward taking this action? How does this fit with our social justice goals? Why does each member of the team feel connected to this work?*

Within the articulation of Unitarian Universalism captured in our Principles, we declare our commitment to the inherent worth and dignity of each person; justice, equity, and compassion in our relationships with each other; and our respect for the intricate and interdependent web of life. Sponsoring an asylum-seeker or family is one of the ways we can manifest these broad commitments.

2 *What practical considerations should we weigh before our congregation takes on a commitment like this?*

Consider the capacity and willingness of a core team to take on long-term support for an individual or family. Figure out if one or more members can become the official sponsor and physically host the person you are sponsoring in their home (or in a separate location). Anticipate support or concerns from your congregation outside of the core team. Every congregation is different, and you are the experts in your own community and its processes!

Thoroughly and realistically assess your circumstances for depth and breadth of preparedness for all that hosting entails. The decision to host an asylum-seeker means reaching across differences in culture, language, ethnicity, nationality, gender identity or other life circumstances. By definition, asylum-seekers are fleeing violence and fear. They have often been deeply traumatized. As a core team, be clear and honest about your capacities and those of your larger faith community. Our goal is to provide a stable community of safety and nurture.

3 *Do we have enough financial support within our community? Has our congregation been successful at a project of this scale before?*

In the first several months of the asylum process, the people you are hosting will most likely be financially dependent on your community for all of their needs (housing, clothing and toiletries, food, transportation, phone, medical/dental/therapeutic care, legal aid, etc.). We suggest that congregations aim to raise \$5,000 - \$7,000 before welcoming guests and then raise an additional \$10,000 - \$15,000 during the course of the year depending on projected expenses. The budget can often be supplemented by in-kind donations from individuals and community organizations.

4

What kinds of cross-cultural experiences have the people in our core team had in the past?

Each individual's identity is multifaceted and complex! Our sense of self is influenced by a wide array of factors: individual characteristics, life events, personal choices, culture, socialization, and so on. It is also inevitably influenced by our relative positions of privilege and power, especially in relation to race, socio-economic status, and citizenship.

In the global context, white Americans generally benefit from a relatively high number of social and economic advantages. It's natural to be unaware of privilege. In fact, that's how it works. But there's no need to get bogged down in personal shame. Society has been structured to give some advantages over others. By accompanying asylum-seekers, people with privilege share what they've been given to make the world more equitable and just.

Be aware that many white Americans have little to no experience with the daily challenges of survival that many other peoples face: worry about where the next meal will come from, lack of access to good medical care, lack of reliable transportation, consistent fear for personal safety, lack of work opportunity, being on the receiving end of bias, prejudice, state violence, and so on. It's also important not to place the burden of education on your fellow congregants and teammates with marginalized identities.

For marginalized Americans, some experiences that guests bring may be familiar, while others remain a world away. Hearing their experiences can be triggering. If you are a UU with marginalized identities, particularly those of race, ethnicity, nationality, or trauma, it's important to know your limits and work through your own adverse experiences so as to offer a stable and non-anxious presence to your team and guests. We value your participation in the CAPAS program, which will bring wisdom to less marginalized members of your team, as well as solace and camaraderie to your guests.

As a hosting congregation, you are volunteering to act in solidarity with a person or family who may be different from you in experiences, identities, communication style, or assumptions. They have undoubtedly demonstrated tremendous courage, resourcefulness, and self-determination along the way. They are also in a position of vulnerability, at least at the start of their journey with you. It is important that your core team honestly and compassionately examine assumptions and points of view, such as Ask vs Guess Culture. Cultural assumptions are shaped by positions of relative privilege, which may be unconscious or invisible to you. Be aware of these so you can receive and support your guests as smoothly as possible. Consider the extent to which your core team and wider congregation is committed to practicing anti-racism, dismantling systems of white supremacy culture, noticing where and how its symptoms function among you, and how you will stay committed to anti-oppressive and multicultural learning, practice, and humility. It's also important that you become comfortable having honest conversations with each other about mistakes when they happen – and they will happen! – so you can learn and grow in your accompaniment work rather than feeling shame and shutting down. Aim for commitment and humility, rather than perfection.

5

How can we stay alert to assumptions or expectations that might get in the way of our efforts to support our guests?

Here's an example of an assumption to be alert for. Helping people who are in need of support is a tenet of many faith traditions and is a central way in which we put our compassion and our commitment to justice – into action. But “helping” can also be problematic, because it can make the helper feel powerful over the person they help. Instead, seek power with. Ideally, while meeting an immediate need, we also work to shift those power dynamics so that the person we're helping can act with as much choice, agency, autonomy and dignity as possible. We are providing solidarity versus charity. Being aware of our assumptions and expectations can keep us centered in that larger goal.

Consider:

- Are there feelings that we're hoping or expecting to have in the process of sponsoring our guest, such as feeling useful (or even essential)? How do we tend to cope, if we find ourselves feeling useless or confused instead of helpful?
- What expectations do we have about how grateful our guests will be for the support we're offering? What if that gratitude doesn't show up the way we're expecting?
- What are our assumptions about time and punctuality? How do we interpret and respond to repeated lateness for appointments? How do we feel about it?
- As adults, have we ever been dependent on another person or persons for our survival? If so, how did it feel? If not, what can we imagine about the feelings it would evoke for us?
- How does the impact of trauma manifest in a person's behavior? What resources do we have available to help us avoid (to the greatest degree possible) adding to that trauma? What do we understand about second-hand trauma? How will we facilitate access to culturally-responsive, trauma-informed care for our guests and be attentive to dynamics of burnout or compassion fatigue in our group too?
- What practices might we commit to among the core team, to help keep our own opinions or preferences in check so that our guests can make the decisions that seem best to them?
- How will we stay sustained and committed to this work together and to the relationships at its center? How will we make meaning from whatever may arise?

Below are additional questions that frequently come up as you move through the discernment process.

FAQs about Hosting

1

Is hosting the same as sponsoring?

Hosting asylum-seekers means that a group makes a commitment to support a person or a family who intends to enter the legal process of seeking asylum in the United States. This commitment is generally for a year or longer and includes providing secure housing (preferably in a home rather than in the church), fundraising for basic needs, accompanying the guest(s) to ICE meetings and court hearings, and offering friendship and community throughout the process. This may or may not include formal sponsorship. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) requires that some asylum-seekers have official sponsors to be granted entry into the United States or to be released from detention. In this case, one member of your team will need to be designated as the official sponsor. This is case-dependent and only required for about half of the guests which congregations have hosted.

2

Is offering Sanctuary the same as supporting asylum-seekers?

Sanctuary and asylum-seeker support are very different things, although both involve stepping up to act as advocates for people who wish to remain in this country. In most cases, sanctuary is invoked when an immigrant has been issued an order of deportation and that person's legal support team needs more time to advocate for the immigrant to remain in the country. The person may be at risk of deportation. They may resort to taking shelter in a house of worship during those proceedings (which may extend many months or years) and can not leave the premises without risking arrest. In most cases, the attorneys for that person are in communication with immigration authorities about the location of their client.

Hosting an asylum-seeker, on the other hand, is entirely within the parameters of the law. If a person has credible fear for their safety in their home country, they are permitted under international law to enter the United States and make a plea for asylum. While authorities are reviewing that claim – which can take many months or years – the asylum-seeker is lawfully allowed to remain in the United States. They do not have to stay within one premises. They may even move if they choose to, though it is their responsibility to inform ICE, or risk an immediate deportation order.

3 *What is required of the person who will house the guest(s)?*

Hosting asylum-seekers means that a group makes a commitment to support. If your congregation is going to house your guests in someone's home, we ask that the housing host review the Guidelines for Shared Living in Appendix 2 and answer the questions there, as part of the discernment process.

The person hosting should have a home that accommodates the guest(s) realistically – e.g., an adequately sized private room or rooms depending on the numbers of people you're willing to host. Ideally, the home will be within easy access to public transportation, but with a sufficient pool of people willing to help with transportation this becomes less essential. The host should assume that even with a strong network of support, they will be the logical "point person" for the guest(s), since they will be sharing their home for a significant length of time. While it is not essential that the host person or family include someone who speaks the immigrant's language, this is an enormous aid in building relationships and easing the process.

Because the official sponsor's home will be the address registered with the immigration authorities, it's important to note that ICE could make an unannounced visit at any time. Anyone in the building whose immigration status is a concern could therefore be at risk. For that reason, we ask you to think carefully about any persons who might regularly be at the location.

4 *Will our guests be able to work?*

Your guest will be eligible to apply for a work permit (EAD) and social security number about 150 days after their asylum application is filed (this timeline sometimes changes). The permit should then be granted within 30 days. Once they have a permit, they can seek employment according to their skills and inclinations.

In most states, they can open their own bank account if they have a passport; this allows them to manage their own funds rather than relying on someone from your team to distribute money as needed. Doing so affirms their agency and independence. In some states, asylum-seekers are eligible to apply for a driver's license after receiving a work permit.

Some asylum-seekers will have a need to earn money to send back to family in their home countries and may desire to work before receiving their work permit. We suggest that they speak with an immigration lawyer about the impacts this could have on their asylum case before making that decision and recognize that the decision is entirely theirs to make.

5

Are we legally liable for our guests? That is, if they commit a crime of some kind or miss an ICE appointment or court hearing, are we at risk in any way?

Neither official sponsors nor the congregation are liable in any way if your guest commits a crime, unless the sponsor or members of your congregation have participated or can be implicated in the crime. Legally speaking, your guest is solely responsible for their appointments with ICE, for showing up for their court dates, and for following any restrictions or rules that may be imposed on them as they await an asylum decision (although the sponsor is making a moral commitment to facilitate whatever is needed for the asylum-seeker to meet the requirements set forth by the government). No one within the sponsoring community is legally responsible for your guest financially, either; your commitment is an ethical and voluntary one.

It's also important to note that your guest is free to move if they choose to, and it is their responsibility to inform ICE if they do so. It is helpful for hosts to remind their guests that failure to inform ICE of a change in residency can result in an immediate deportation order; but this is ultimately the decision of the person you are hosting.

“

I am living a life I don't regret, A life that will resonate with my ancestors, and with as many generations forward as I can imagine. I am attending to the crises of my time with my best self, I am of communities that are doing our collective best to honor our ancestors and all humans to come.

”

– adrienne maree brown,
Emergent Strategy



Readiness Conversations

Once your group has considered the questions above, identified a willing host, and agreed to move forward with hosting, CAPAS will set up a series of calls to assess your readiness to proceed. The initial calls should include your minister, the housing host (if applicable), and the lead members of your core team. It is often a good idea to invite key decision makers from the congregation, such as your Board Chair, even if they will not be actively involved in the asylum support process.

This commitment involves taking a leap of faith to say yes to many uncertainties. We will work together to answer questions and think through as many aspects of the process as possible, but we know that we won't be able to predict every scenario. Together we'll stumble forward with open hearts.

Here are some of the questions that are likely to be asked during the calls, so you have a sense of how we're trying to assess readiness to proceed.

- 1** Can you describe your congregation's leadership structure (both formal and informal) and offer your assessment of whether those people support this effort?
- 2** Does your congregation have experience sustaining a project of this level? If so, we'd love to hear a bit about what you learned in that process. If not, we'd love to hear a bit about what you're worried about and what you're excited about.
- 3** Please tell us about your congregation in relation to immigration justice. Do you have an Immigrant Justice team in place? How active is it? What kinds of activism or accompaniment is it engaged in? Is there wide congregational support for its work, beyond the active members?

- 4** What kinds of self-assessments and/or training programs has your congregation engaged with around issues of power, privilege, and race? Is your core group of volunteers open to having these conversations with each other as the asylum support process unfolds?
- 5** Having legal help early in the process is crucial. If you don't have a local immigration attorney who is prepared to offer pro bono assistance, is the congregation prepared to fund such representation (which can be several thousands of dollars) on behalf of your guest?
- 6** Who will be the named official sponsor if needed? Is that person willing to play the central role of coordinating the other volunteers or will that coordination role be played by another member of your group?
- 7** If you're not located in a major metropolitan area, what is the largest city near you? How long does it typically take to drive there? Is public transportation available to get there? How much does it cost and how long does it take?

We will also hold a separate call with the housing host, if applicable, to discuss the housing arrangement, expectations, and general attitudes toward hosting and sharing space. Having individuals live in your home for an extended period of time often raises a number of challenges even if hosts are very enthusiastic. Living with people who have experienced trauma also requires additional patience and understanding. The congregation may want to consider having a back-up housing option.

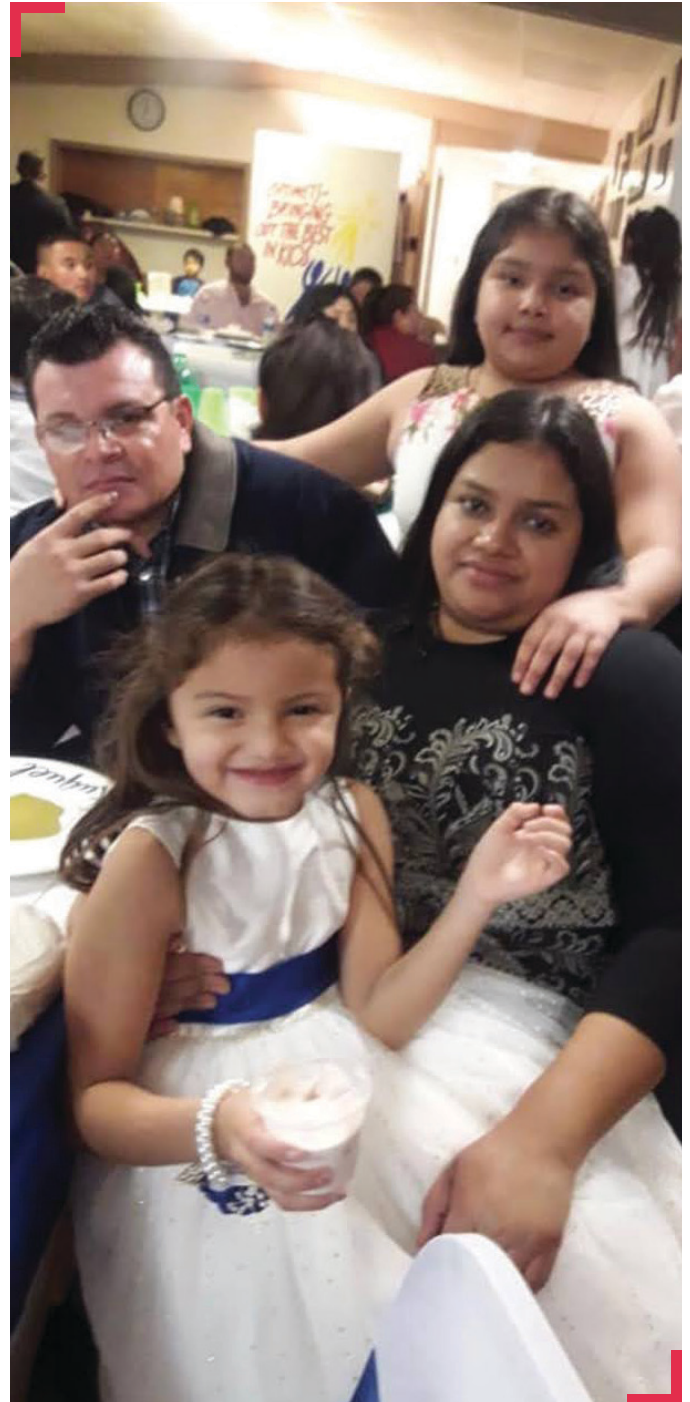
The Matching Process

CAPAS will be in contact with one or more of the organizations that directly support asylum-seekers at the border, in detention, or recently arrived who are awaiting sponsorship or a host. You may receive information on a potential guest within days or it could be a few months. Once we have identified an asylum-seeking individual or family who appear to be a good fit, we will share their profile and all the information we have about them with your leadership team.

If it sounds like a potential fit, we will try to arrange a video call between the asylum-seeker and your core team. Whenever possible, CAPAS will facilitate direct communication between the congregation and the asylum-seeker, so that you can begin to develop a relationship as you make travel and arrival arrangements. If the asylum-seeker is in detention, communication may be limited.

Once both parties agree this is a good fit, it's time to take the necessary next steps. This may involve official sponsorship paperwork and writing letters of support for them to receive humanitarian parole. It may mean that the person's travel is booked almost immediately for them to come to you, or they may not be ready for a few weeks.

The policies and practices governing how immigrants and asylum-seekers are treated by the U.S. government shift day by day, which makes it difficult to estimate how long you may wait between the time you finish your discernment and the day you finally welcome your guest(s). Preparing to host involves some "hurry up and wait!"



Preparing To Receive Your Guest

Here are some suggestions to prepare for your guest, ranging from practical to interpersonal.

Prepare the parole or bond package, if needed

If your guest requires an official sponsor, that person will receive guidance from attorneys or advocates on what information you need to provide (sometimes it is as simple as your name and address). Your congregation may be asked to provide a letter of support outlining your program and that you are committed to supporting the individual(s), getting them established in the community, securing legal counsel, and ensuring that they make it to all ICE appointments and hearings. A sample letter can be found in [Appendix 3](#).

If your guest is required to post a bond in order to be released from detention, we recommend contacting the Mutual Aid Immigration Network hotline, which can help individuals apply to bond funds. The free hotline number is (213) 342-1143. They accept calls Mondays from 11-6 (PST), Tuesdays 12-3 (PST), and Thursdays 10-2 (PST). Alternatively you can find immigrant bail funds on this list: communityjusticeexchange.org/en/immigration-directory. Congregations may be asked to pay the bond if an alternative source isn't available.

Further specify roles on your team

Now that you have some information on your guests, you can make sure that you have the necessary volunteers in place to support their unique needs. These roles will vary, but will generally include:

- **Team lead:** It is usually best to have one person designated as the team coordinator. The team lead does not need to be the same as the housing host. The team lead can coordinate the various other support tasks that will be needed.
- **Volunteer coordinator:** This is a critical role that recruits and assigns tasks to volunteers as they arise (especially identifying transportation volunteers).
- **Language coordinator:** If your guest does not speak English, this person will coordinate interpreters and will arrange ESL courses if desired.
- **Finance/fundraising lead:** Track the program budget and take the lead on coordinating fundraisers. Provide your guest their regular stipend and help them set up a bank account.
- **Legal liaison:** Serve as the main contact with the immigration lawyer or clinic and liaise with any lawyers or advocates who were previously working with your guest.
- **Admin:** Conduct the many administrative tasks that arise such as travel arrangements, scanning pertinent documents, setting up cell phone service, making doctor's appointments (this last one may be a separate role if there are significant medical/dental/therapeutic needs), etc.
- **House prep:** If your guest will be housed in their own space, this person ensures that it is furnished with all basic necessities and serves as the point person for needed repairs or other issues.
- **Education lead:** Facilitate school/daycare enrollment, job training, driver's license prep, tutors, etc.
- **Communications:** Keep the congregation up-to-date on key developments. Write pieces for the monthly or weekly newsletters, arrange cafe conversations, or other opportunities for fellow congregants to learn about the program.

Put together your budget

Now that you know the number of guests you will be supporting and some of their needs, you can develop a budget. There are many factors such as the housing situation, level of medical need, travel expenses, etc. that will change based on each congregation and guest. Sample budgets are below:

	Costs for Family of 3 Living in their Own Home	Costs for 1 Individual Living in a Host's Home
Rent	\$12,000	\$0
Groceries and Personal Items (\$100/wk stipend)	\$5,200	\$2,600
Medical/Dental Care	\$2,000	\$1,000
Therapy	\$1,000	\$500
Daycare	\$1,000	\$0
Phone; Netflix	\$650	\$325
Household supplies and furnishings	\$1,000	\$500
Airfare/transportation to congregation	\$1,000	\$500
Bus transportation (monthly passes for 6 mo.)	\$500	\$250
Fees (Driver's license, passport photos, etc)	\$200	\$100
Utilities	\$2,400	\$600
Volunteer Recognition	\$150	\$150
Parties/Birthdays	\$300	\$150
Legal Counsel	\$7,000	\$7,000
Misc	\$1,000	\$500
TOTAL	\$23,400	\$14,175

Fundraise

We recommend meeting with your congregation's finance team (accountant, treasurer and/or chair of your finance committee) and minister to discuss how to handle fundraising, tracking, and disbursing the funds to your guest and/or their host.

Some congregations set up separate accounts to support the project, while others feel comfortable using their regular channels. Some congregations use tax-deductible donations for the program, while others use non tax-deductible contributions to meet their guest's needs, and some use a combination of the two. Clear communication about how funds will be handled and any IRS implications will be important at the beginning of the process. Because providing your guest with a regular stipend is important to respect their autonomy over their purchases, savings, or money to send home, you want to make sure this is built into your processes from the beginning. Stipends need to be provided as a gift rather than as income, since your guest will likely not yet have a work permit.

We recommend that you aim to have between \$5,000 - \$7,000 raised by the time your guest arrives. Your guest's pending arrival will be an excellent opportunity to tap into your community's excitement and generosity. Although you don't want to share details of your guest's story without their permission, it will likely be ok to share the country they are coming from and a few very basic details. After you begin to develop a rapport, you can ask your guests what they are comfortable sharing. Be sure to get permission to share photographs and only use their first names when sharing things publicly.

Fundraising can take place in a variety of forms. You may want to start with an introduction of the program during a Sunday service, paired with a collection. Follow this with a fundraising email to the congregation and potential community supporters. Local social justice groups and

nearby UU congregations may be willing to make regular contributions. You could offer to provide them regular written updates and a yearly presentation on the program. This could also be a great way to build your volunteer pool.

After this initial fundraising push, there are many creative ways to raise funds. You can have a virtual housewarming party, where people "sponsor" various items for your guest's new living situation. The same thing could be done around the holidays. Some congregations have auctioned Art for Asylum donated artwork, sold tickets to themed dinners, or offered musical concerts.

With your guest's permission, you could establish a GoFundMe campaign to help support them financially. They can help craft the message on the page. Be specific about the reasons the funds are needed. Send the link to everyone you can think of. You will have the best luck if you update it once a week or so and add news and photos, with the input and permission of your guest.

Note that guests may not be able to open bank accounts in their own name, so the fundraising site may need to be attached to your own account. Be transparent about all expenses. Work out a regular and predictable way to provide your guest with the cash they need from the account so that it doesn't feel like another level of dependence.



Support your guest in detention

Detention (prison) is a harsh experience for all who are incarcerated. For displaced people, detention follows a difficult and sometimes traumatizing journey. It's challenging to be in detention under even the best of personal circumstances and much harder when one is struggling with poor health, past trauma, language barriers, the grief of leaving loved ones behind, and the many uncertainties of migration. Detention also means incredibly boring days with time passing very slowly. Usually those who are detained have little idea of what's happening with their asylum process and no sense of how long they will be detained. If your guest is in detention, you can support them by making yourself available for phone calls (with a translator if needed) and supplying funds for their commissary account (see below).

People who are incarcerated by ICE are not permitted a free phone call, though some detention centers will help them contact a person who can help them buy a phone card through the commissary. They cannot receive incoming calls, so you will need to learn to recognize the phone number that they are calling from.

Having some funds in a commissary account while in detention is very important, especially in order to buy a phone card, toiletries, and snacks. Detention commissaries register inmate funds by their name and "A" number (you cannot send funds until you have the "A" number). Systems for depositing funds vary, so once you know what detention center you're dealing with, go to their website to find out the process. Many of them use Western Union. Commissary prices tend to be quite inflated as the result of predatory companies contracted with many detention facilities, so money doesn't stretch very far. You can send whatever amount is comfortable for your budget. \$30-50/week is average.

Don't deposit money into someone's account in any way other than the "official" mechanism used by the detention center. Sometimes sponsor names/numbers are sold within detention centers in order to scam you, so don't agree to deposit money from or for people you don't know.

Another way to stay connected to your future guest is to send mail to them in detention. Many facilities have strict guidelines about how letters need to be addressed and what kinds of stationary and ink is allowed, so check their website for rules. Be aware that the mail is likely to be opened and monitored so be careful about what details you include. We have heard from many people who have been detained how much it meant to them to hear from those on the outside who were wishing them well and sending messages of hope, strength, community, and encouragement.

Arrange for your guest to travel to your home

Depending on where your guest is coming from, you may need to make travel arrangements for them. Some organizations working with asylum-seekers at the border are able to cover the cost of transportation, others will expect your congregation to cover the costs. You may be asked to book a flight or bus ticket as early as the following day, within a few days, or further out.

If the asylum-seeker is being directly released from a detention center, sponsors will usually need to email or fax a copy of the guest's flight or bus itinerary to an ICE officer. ICE will then transport them to the airport or Greyhound station for their travel. Depending on where the detention center and ICE offices are located, there may be community groups ready and able to assist with this transition.

Build up your support network

Now that you know who it is you'll be sponsoring, you may want to expand your support team to include people who share important dimensions of your guest's identity. If you're hosting someone who identifies as gay or transgender, send out inquiries within your community to build a list of queer and queer-friendly folks, especially those who speak your guest's language. You may also try to identify supportive people in the community who are around the same age as your guest or who share another identity important to them (for example, based on their profession back at home, their religious identity, etc.).

Shrink the language barrier

If your guest does not speak English and you do not speak their native language(s), connect with bilingual people in order to create a strong network for your guest and housing host. If no one in your hosting household speaks your guest's language, living together will sometimes be challenging for all of you. It will be very important that all of you have access to people able and willing to help.

Get familiar with Google Translate app on your phone so you can use it easily and introduce your guest to it if they don't already know about it. We also recommend the tarjim.ly/en app for free live interpretation help. This is also a perfect opportunity for you to brush up on your language skills or enroll in a class (many public libraries offer free access to language learning apps such as Mango Languages or DuoLingo)!

Identify potential pro-bono immigration lawyers

Legal representation is one of the most important supports you will offer your guest. A lawyer will be needed to handle your guest's asylum case, provide valuable guidance for interacting with and attending ICE appointments, filing for a work permit, and other related legal concerns. To identify an experienced immigration lawyer, contact local immigrant-focused advocacy organizations, area law schools, or the local bar association. Links to lists of attorneys are below. Some guests will have been represented by lawyers who helped them enter the United States, and in certain circumstances those lawyers may be able to continue to represent them. Immigration law is federal so lawyers are able to practice across state lines.

If you are unable to find a pro-bono lawyer, your congregation may need to pay for representation for your guest. This can range between \$4,000 - \$10,000. After identifying one or two potential lawyers, they will likely want to meet your guest and review their paperwork before agreeing to accept their case. Once the lawyer and guest

are under contract, you should ask your guest if they are comfortable with you discussing their case with their lawyer. The lawyer is their representative and must follow strict attorney/client confidentiality protocols.

- Immigration Advocates' Network National Directory of Nonprofit Immigration Legal Services in the U.S. www.immigrationlawhelp.org
- Pro-Bono Attorneys by State: www.justice.gov/eoir/list-pro-bono-legal-service-providers
- National Immigration Legal Services Directory: www.immigrationadvocates.org/nonprofit/legaldirectory/index

Explore what kinds of health, dental, therapeutic services are available

Find out what the options are in your city for people who cannot pay for their healthcare. If the person you're hosting identifies as LGBTQ+, be sure the places you find are queer-friendly. Learn about the resources care services have available for translation services. During the months before asylum is granted, engage a social worker who can walk you through the kinds of insurance that might be available (this varies by state). In some cities, hospitals or clinics may have a department particularly focused on immigrant and refugee health concerns. Research what's available in your area and make a connection.

- [Find a Federally Qualified Health Center near you](#). Community Health Centers — also known as Federally Qualified Health Centers, or FQHCs — provide care regardless of your insurance status or ability to pay. There are nearly 1,400 health center organizations with more than 11,000 locations across the country. They can be found in all 50 states and U.S. territories. All health centers offer comprehensive primary and preventive health care. Many also offer dental, mental health, and pharmacy services.

- [Planned Parenthood](#) may be an option for free or affordable sexual and reproductive health care, and more. Find one near you [at this link](#) or by calling 1-800-230-PLAN.
- Here is a directory of [LGBTQ Primary Care Community Health Centers in the](#) and [Trans Health Clinics](#). (Trans folx can often access hormones through Planned Parenthood and sometimes other clinics/ community health centers.)
- For a list of low-cost therapists, visit <https://openpathcollective.org/find-a-clinician/>. You can sort by language. You can also contact the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#) helpline that offers free assistance and advice 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 1-800-950-6264. The Federally Qualified Health Centers also sometimes offer mental health support as does [Catholic Charities](#). When looking for a therapist, you will need to find one that speaks your guest's native language and ideally find someone with a trauma-informed approach.

Become an expert in your local public transportation

If you generally drive or walk in your city but there is a system of buses and trains, become familiar enough that you can help your guest navigate the system in the early days or weeks of their stay. One of the earliest ways for your guest to reclaim their agency is for them to get places they want to go without having to be accompanied or driven everywhere. Learning the public transportation system will be a challenge in the beginning, but it will offer a lot of freedom very quickly.

Explore options for English classes

Not all asylum-seekers have an interest in or are ready to begin to learn English, especially in the early months. Some of them may have had very little formal schooling in their past, which can make it challenging to read or write in their own language, much less in a foreign one. Nevertheless, having the option available if they choose it will be very helpful. In the early weeks and months when it will be difficult for your guest to work, having a schedule with potential

activities will be important. Find out what kinds of classes are available for free, especially ones that are walking distance from the guest's home or on an easy route for public transportation. Libraries and community centers are a good place to start.

Look into state driver's license requirements

Depending on your state, asylum-seekers may be eligible for driver's licenses. Some states require them to have a work permit, others do not. Because transportation will be one of your biggest volunteer needs, helping your guests obtain licenses as quickly as possible will be helpful. Your DMV should have study guides in multiple languages and you may be able to find practice tests online. In most cases, even if your guests had a license in their home country, they will need to pass driving tests in the U.S. and hold a permit for a period of time before receiving a full license.

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Para nosotros el programa nos ayudado demasiado nos están ayudando abrir un buen camino aquí en este país que están difícil cuando uno viene llegando mi familia y yo estamos muy agradecidos con el programa.

For us, the program has helped us a lot, they are helping us open a good path here in this country, which is difficult when one comes, my family and I are very grateful to the program.

”

– Stefany, asylum-seeker from Honduras

Welcoming and Settling In

There are many dimensions to settling into a new living situation, especially in the case of people who have left their homelands out of necessity rather than choice. As part of your guest's support network, your patience and flexibility are essential – along with compassion for yourselves and for your guest amid all the uncertainty. The following are some guidelines and best practices to keep in mind when your guest arrives:

Shop in advance

Shortly before your guest arrives, ask them about foods they'd like to have immediately on hand as well as any urgent clothing needs (e.g., winter coat if they are coming from a warm climate). Having these items in advance will enable your guest to take the first few days to settle in without an urgent need to go shopping.

Greet with someone who speaks their language

When you pick up your guest and head toward home, let your guest know how far away you live and point out landmarks as you go as a way to help orient them, but don't expect it all to be retained. This leg of their trip is just one leg of what has likely been an extremely long journey. They are bound to be both nervous and exhausted.



Don't ask for details about what your guest has been through or why they fled to the U.S.

Over time, much of the story will come out. In some cases the person will have with them an English language version of their "credible fear" interview when they entered the U.S. and they may offer it to you to help you understand their history. Unless you need this information in order to help communicate with a lawyer, don't ask for it. Most asylum-seekers have been through trauma, often multiple times. People process such events in their own time and manner, often by choosing not to remember or to recount when possible.

Give them a house tour

Show them around the house and yard (if there is one). Give them safety information. Tell them the essential little tricks, like how to get the shower to the right temperature. But be careful not to overwhelm your guest with too much info all at once. Offer food and water and, if it's a shared space, let them know that they can help themselves to what they need without asking (e.g., getting a midnight snack from the fridge). If you are using a housing agreement based on the [Considerations for Shared Housing](#), you can review that in a few days.

If you have pets, introduce them

Fear of dogs is common, especially of large dogs, so be patient; for some, the only experience of cats may be of strays that are viewed as full of vermin, so there may be cultural norms to get used to.

Allow decompression

Show them the basics that they need to know for the first day, but know that they may like to rest and have some time alone in their new space. Some people may even need to sleep for most of the first few days.

Show them how to use the machines they will need

You may want to consider having a binder with simple instructions for most appliances, translated into your guest's preferred language. The most important machines are likely the washer, dryer, microwave, and dishwasher. Many people won't be familiar with a garbage disposal. Find out if they like to make coffee and help them do it (some of us take our coffee stronger or weaker than they may prefer; a one-cup drip can solve the problem cheaply). Show them your system of recycling and maybe post a picture of items that can be recycled. In time you may also discover key kitchen tools (like a mortar and pestle) that would help your guests make foods they enjoy.

For other members of your support team (those in roles other than host), here are some early things that you will want to pay attention to:

Find out when your guest has their check-in with ICE

Usually the first check-in is scheduled for within a week of your guest's arrival, and sometimes the office is an hour drive away or more, depending on where you live. Try to make sure a bilingual person can accompany them.

In some cases, a tracking ankle bracelet will be imposed on the guest at this first check-in, which is distressing and humiliating so be prepared to offer sympathy and comfort. If they come to you with an ankle bracelet, try to advocate that ICE removes it. Providing a letter of support from your congregation may be helpful (see [Appendix 3](#) for a sample).

If your guest is ok with it, scan their health, legal, and ID documents

Having all of their information electronically will make tasks such as school enrollment, setting doctor's appointments, and having initial conversations with lawyers much easier. You can also ensure that they understand any recent communications from ICE that may not have been in their native language.

Try to complete any scanning in one day so that you can quickly return their documents to them. Also assure them that you won't share them with anyone without their permission. In the coming weeks, you may want to ask them if they'd be comfortable signing a consent document to share medical information with certain members of your team. This will make it much easier to help make doctor's appointments or pick up prescriptions.

Plan a shopping trip after a few days to buy clothing and groceries

Most asylum-seekers will arrive with very little clothing and may need pretty much everything. In addition to donations from your congregation, look for charitable organizations that offer free clothes or a clothing swap. GoodWill and other thrift stores can also provide inexpensive options. This may save your team a lot of money, especially for expensive things like boots and heavy coats. Underwear, socks, and some other clothing will need to be purchased new. Figure out what your limits are financially. Communicate this clearly so your guest isn't surprised in the store.

The first few times that your guest goes grocery shopping, it may be good to show them the variety of stores in the area, including ethnic groceries. Point out which stores offer better bargains and how to check for store brands. It may also be helpful to note that some things that may have been inexpensive in their hometown (e.g., seafood or certain fruits), may actually be quite expensive in parts of the U.S. where they are less readily available. Print a seasonal veggie chart so they know when some produce is more accessible and less expensive.

During your early shopping trips, help your guest(s) learn about American currency at the cash registers. It may be helpful to do a tutorial and also make a quick conversion chart so that they understand what something costs in terms of their home country's currency.

Buying a phone and setting up a plan

In today's world this is essential for everything from making social plans to communicating with a doctor to seeking work. It will need to be a smartphone. Sometimes it's possible to transfer a used phone to their name, but many of these are "locked" by the company that first issued them. Buying into that company's plan may not be the most affordable option. Services like US Mobile tend to offer inexpensive, unlocked phones and affordable, no-contract plans. Note that most inexpensive phone plans require a separate purchase of a card or plan for calling outside the United States. Many guests may be able to use Whatsapp to call their home country for free.

When and if your guest is up for it, plan a small get-together

Introduce your guest to the support team and community members who speak their native language. You can make this a small festive welcome party. Expand the sense of connection that your guest has with the chance to visit with a wider range of people. It is especially helpful to invite people close to your guest's demographic (queer if they are, younger if they are, etc.). This gives them access early on to a range of people they can then contact on their own if they choose to.

Follow the lead of your guest on this. Some people will not feel sociable for a while or will be inherently introverted. Find out what kind and size of gathering would feel most comfortable for them, if any. Prepare your congregation to give your guest space and privacy as requested. Your congregation is not entitled to the guest's story, vulnerability, or gratitude. It is enough to have assisted them. Their well-being and agency are of highest priority.

"Prayer for Travelers" by Rev. Angela Herrera

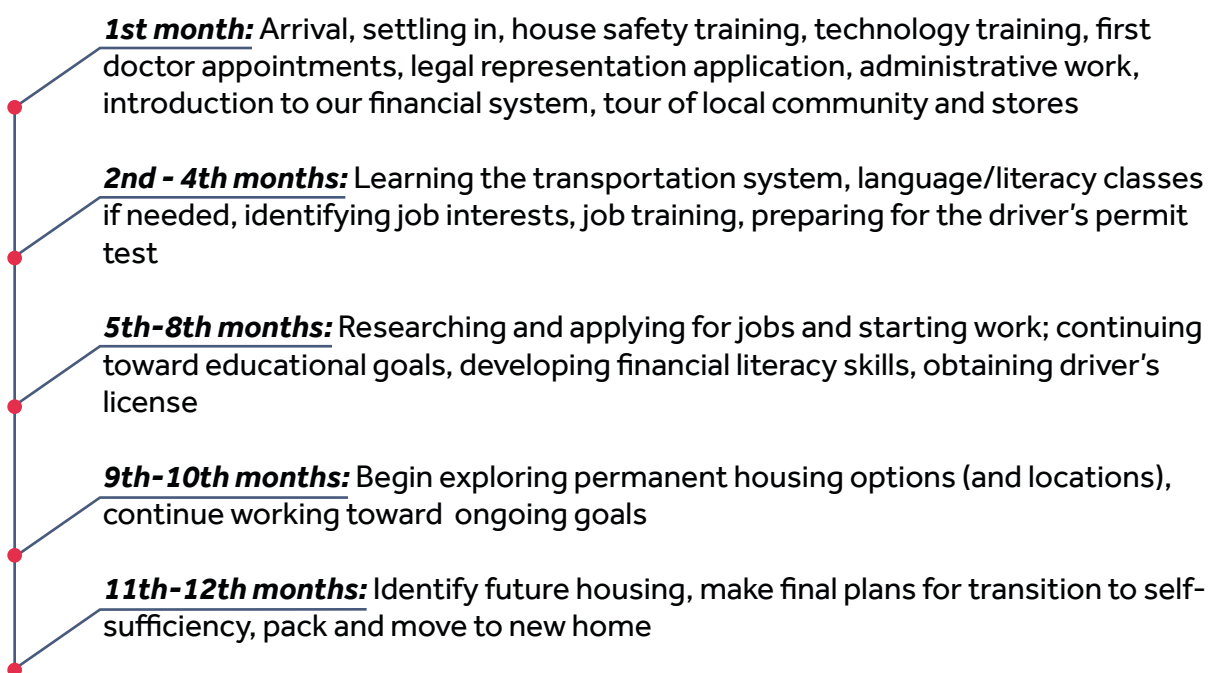
This is a prayer for all the travelers. For the ones who start out in beauty, who fall from grace, who step gingerly, looking for the way back. And for those who are born into the margins, who travel from one liminal space to another, crossing boundaries in search of center. This is a prayer for the ones whose births are a passing from darkness to darkness, who all their lives are drawn toward the light, and keep moving, and for those whose journeys are a winding road that begins and ends in the same place, though only when the journey is completed do they finally know where they are. For all the travelers, young and old, aching and joyful, weary and full of life; the ones who are here, and the ones who are not here; the ones who are like you (and they're all like you) and the ones who are different (for in some ways, we each travel alone). This is a prayer for traveling mercies, And sure-footedness, for clear vision, for bread for your body and spirit, for water, for your safe arrival and for everyone you see along the way.

As Time Goes On

Establishing goals and a rough timeline

You may find it helpful both for your program and for your guest to lay out a general timeline that you will customize to meet your guest's specific needs and goals. It's important that goals are things that the guest wants to achieve, rather than what we think they should achieve. But also consider the program's limitations. As you begin to think through your guest's plan beyond the program, it's important to help them think through preferences such as type of work and location. If your guest has relatives in some other part of the country who they would like to try living with, it might be worthwhile for them to go for a visit to try it out (keeping in mind the dates for ICE appointments or court date, and any travel restrictions that might apply). Below is a sample timeline.

General Program Timeline (based on a 1-year timeframe):



Celebrate the journey

Being on this journey of solidarity with your guest is cause for celebration. This experience offers congregations, volunteers, and guests the opportunity for friendship, cross-cultural learning, and expanded avenues of compassion. Be sure to celebrate key milestones like birthdays, anniversaries, asylum applications submitted. Share traditions, foods, and experiences. While so much of this work can be intense and weigh heavily on those involved, there is much joy in walking this path together. Look for ways to lift that up!

Honoring your guest's independence and agency

As you provide support and hospitality for your guests as they create a new life in the United States, it's important to honor the survival skills that have helped them through very difficult situations so far. They are experts in their lived experience and their own needs. They must be trusted and empowered to make decisions for themselves. Although they have limited material resources, they still have the capacity to be agents of their own lives. As we join them in their journey by providing some guidance and material support, we also want to honor and support their independence, resilience, and resourcefulness.

It can be challenging as a host to lend support and offer solidarity, while at the same time not limiting the independence of your guests. They will decide for themselves how they want to move forward with their asylum case and in their new lives. As you develop bonds of care and connection with your guest, it is natural that you'll also feel deeply invested in their future, as you would with any person you care about. If there are times when your guest makes decisions or plans you don't agree with, it may be challenging to resist the urge to "fix" or change what you see. Remember that your guest has the right to make decisions based on their own moral compass, judgment, skills, experiences, and vision for their life.

Through self-reflection and the support of your own community, consider what practices will help you offer support while refraining from imposing your own sense of what's best for your guest.

Identity, power & privilege

We all have a variety of identities, lived experiences, and social locations related to privilege and power that inform how we move through the world. In relating to guests seeking asylum and temporary sanctuary in our community, it's important to remember that an imbalanced power dynamic exists, and to seek to equalize this wherever we can. This power imbalance is intensified by the fact that hosts

hold the physical power over the residence, the financial power over resources, and the knowledge of local customs, laws, and social norms. Everything we can do to reduce the skewing of power and support the independence of our guests will help.

Throughout the process of sponsorship and accompaniment, we are also called to remember that there are no saviors here: we engage in this work as human beings expressing our humanity by offering solidarity to those who have lived through truly unjust and traumatizing situations.

For further exploration of and reflection on how your own identities may inform your role as a host, and in social justice work more broadly, you may wish to check out the ["Who are you?"](#) section of the UU College of Social Justice Study Guide, which includes sections for those who identify as people of color and for those who identify as white.



Managing expectations

Throughout the sponsorship experience, it's a good idea to revisit some of the questions you considered during your discernment process, especially concerning expectations. The more clearly we can name our own expectations and assumptions, the more easily we will adjust without disappointment if things turn out to be a bit different from what we're anticipating.

We all react differently to new circumstances in our lives and you may see a range of reactions from your guest(s). For example, the guest you are matched with might be an introvert who likes to stay home, watch movies, and read; or they may be very extroverted and like to go out every day or night, talk with friends on the phone, and engage with new people all the time.

Likewise, different people respond differently to the sudden change in circumstances, from moving from places of scarcity and danger to relative abundance and safety. Some will hold on tightly to every possession that comes their way, because they have come from a place of survival in which they had guaranteed access to nothing. Some may quickly spend any money shared with them, and others will immediately want to send it home to loved ones who they feel need it more. Some might only pick out a few items at the store when given the option to get "anything" they wanted, as they are accustomed to few possessions and feel no need to fill their closet immediately. Others will want to buy everything they like, because it's been a long time since they were able to choose something for themselves. These are all different responses to the same set of circumstances. Honoring and affirming your guest's preferences, even when they vary from your own, is part of making your home a place of sanctuary.

Know your own needs and limits

Every life has its challenges, even for those of us who are relatively privileged. Illness in the family, job loss, and other unexpected developments can impact our capacity to be good hosts. Do your best, be honest about your limits, and ask for help when you need it. Also be sure to communicate the program's limits in terms of timeline of support and amounts of funding.

“

Our vision of the Beloved Community must stand against a vision that would allow the privilege of the few to be accepted as just and even holy. Our religious vision must ask the Gospel question, 'Who is my neighbor[?]' and strive always to include more and more of us as we intone the words that gave birth to this nation, 'We the people'...

– The Rev. William G. Sinkford

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Be patient with all involved, especially those under stress, including yourself!

The housing host may be sharing their home with a guest for six months or a year. Over the long haul there are always stresses (as in any relationship). These are compounded by the sense of uncertainty that any asylum-seeker must live with, by language and culture barriers, and by the lasting effects of trauma. There is a lot that good will, patience, and intention can overcome, so hang in there! Use team meetings as an opportunity to vent in a healthy way (rather than at your guests)!

Coping with trauma

Symptoms of anxiety, depression, and/or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are common in asylum-seekers, though not universal. Trauma manifests in many different ways. Healing also happens in a wide variety of forms and practices. Be flexible with guests' coping mechanisms without judgment. This will create a supportive environment during this transitional time in your guest's life.

Each person will have their own way of coping. Some may take long walks, sleep in late, or stay occupied all the time with TV. Some ways of coping may look as though your guest is disengaged, but that may be an important way for them to take care of themselves. Hosts sometimes experience frustration about their guests' missed appointments or "inability to keep a calendar." Sometimes just getting out of bed is an achievement for someone dealing with the effects of trauma. Though missed appointments can lead to other challenges for your guest, try to approach the topic with compassion and empathy. Try to be accepting and understanding. Re-center in the prioritization of your guest's well-being and agency. Respecting their process of healing in the ways and on the timeline that is right for them.

There are also cultural differences in how people may heal from trauma. In the United States, it is common to pursue therapy in a variety of forms. But U.S. therapeutic approaches are often unfamiliar or less useful to people from different cultural backgrounds. Going to church, playing sports, or gathering with others in the community who share some of their identities or experiences may be the best options for your guest. Ultimately, we must trust each person to know what they need to heal from what they've experienced.

If your guest is open to professional help and is seeking your support, work together to find options that will feel most accessible, relevant, and welcoming for them. Research health care and mental health services where your guest's language is commonly spoken, where providers specialize in care for immigrants and refugees, and where there is a trauma-informed approach.

Below are links for learning more about trauma and finding resources for healing and support.

- [The Trauma-informed Care Collective Toolkit](#) aims to build a better understanding of what trauma is and how trauma affects the thoughts, actions and behaviors of people affected by it so that we can come together in solidarity and hope.
- The Open Path Collective offers a [database of low-cost therapists](#), which can be sorted by language.
- Psychology Today also offers a [database of providers](#).
- [The National Alliance on Mental Illness](#) hosts a helpline that offers free assistance and advice 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 1-800-950-6264.
- The [Federally Qualified Health Centers](#) also sometimes offer mental health support as does [Catholic Charities](#).
- [Somatic Experiencing](#) is another approach to trauma healing. [Click here to find somatic experiencing practitioners](#) near you.
- [National Resources for Sexual Assault Survivors and their Loved Ones](#) from RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network)

Resources for secondary trauma (for people who are supporting trauma survivors)

- [What is compassion fatigue?](#)
- [Self-care tips for compassion fatigue](#)
- The Trauma Stewardship Institute provides a number of resources about secondary trauma including podcasts, free downloadable guides, and books. In [Trauma Stewardship](#), longtime trauma worker Laura van Dernoot Lipsky offers a deep and empathetic survey of the often-unrecognized toll taken on those working to make the world a better place. She provides a variety of simple and profound practices that will allow us to remake ourselves—and ultimately the world. We also recommend the TedX talk [Beyond the Cliff](#) by van Dernoot Lipsky.

Developing a Transition Plan with Your Guest

Planning for your guest's transition out of your program can involve a range of emotions for all involved. Your guest may be excited to be further along in their goals and to feel established in the community. At the same time they may be nervous about continuing to find their way in a new country. Program volunteers may also feel a mixture of relief at the end of a busy year or two, loss at having the guest move on, or excitement to think about helping future guests.

In addition to handling these emotions, there may be many details and goals that will need to be reached. In some cases, your program may have reached its limit in terms of timeline or budget. Clear communication is critical at every step so that everyone is on the same page

about what will mark the end of your guest's participation in your program. Although you may not want to say this to your guest, it is important to begin working on a transition plan from the day they arrive. Throughout their time with you, assist your guest in building skills and community connections that they can look to for support beyond your program.

Transitioning out of your program doesn't mean that you can't have a continued relationship with your guest. If this is mutually desired, you can continue to interact or even support them in defined ways, just remember to be clear about the limits of any continued support.

Ongoing CAPAS Support and Coaching

The CAPAS program staff will guide your preparations. Once your guest has arrived, the staff is always available to help you think through various challenges that may arise. We offer a monthly call for all CAPAS congregations, to meet, problem solve, and hear from various experts on related topics. We can also work with you on developing educational programs for your congregation or crafting Sunday services focused on immigrant justice topics. We will share related resources as we learn about them and will engage congregations in advocacy work.





Summary

The crisis of displacement is very serious and people's lives are quite literally at stake. Our Unitarian Universalist faith guides us to mitigate the confusion, fear, and suffering and dismantle the systems and policies which generate it.

We need your voice, your heart, and your action to create a world of safety and welcome. We invite you to join the journey of accompanying asylum-seekers in pursuit of liberation and safety.

To learn more about the Congregational Accompaniment Project for Asylum Seekers, please contact the UUSC by filling out the interest form at tinyurl.com/capasuusc or by emailing capas@uusc.org.

“

We [Unitarian Universalists] are believers in the responsibility of everyone, all of us, each of us, no matter how frightened we are in these frightening times, to be something other than afraid.

”

– from Rev. Victoria Safford's sermon, “Safe and Profoundly Unsound” January 13, 2008

APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY - KEY TERMS, ACRONYMS, AND FORMS

Asylum-seeker

A person from another country who has entered the asylum process in the United States. The process begins at the border or within the U.S., when an asylum-seeker declares a well-founded fear of violence or persecution in their home country due to race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. If this initial “credible fear” testimony is provisionally accepted, the person is put into detention, granted humanitarian parole, and released into the U.S. Detention can last for a few days, many months, or even years. Children, pregnant women, and people who are very ill have been imprisoned, and many deaths have been reported among ICE detainees.

Humanitarian Parole

People in immigration detainment may have the opportunity to be considered for “parole,” in which they can be released after initially establishing that they have a credible fear of violence or death if they were to return to their own country. The chance of someone being released on parole is more likely if there is an American citizen willing to vouch for and support them once they are paroled.

Sponsor

A U.S. citizen who has agreed to offer safe shelter, food, and basic support for an asylum-seeker, without any expectation of an exchange of services in return. This person does not have to be the same as the housing host.

Host Congregation

A faith community that has decided together to join in the support of an asylum-seeking individual or family. In addition to identifying the community member willing to provide a safe home for the asylum-seeker(s), a host congregation provides a team of willing volunteers who will help the asylum-seeker(s) find an immigration lawyer, navigate public

transportation, find appropriate health care, raise funds, show up for ICE check-ins and court hearings, and get connected to the community.

Parole Package

When your congregation is matched with an asylum-seeker in detention, you may be asked to pull together the materials that will make the case for your guest’s release. These include a letter that details your intent and capacity to support the person; proof of identity, citizenship, residency, and income of the person offering housing; and letters from others in your community who also agree to support the asylum-seeker (with interpretation, transportation, orientation to the city, and so on).

EAD

An Employment Authorization Document ([Form I-766/EAD](#)) is the [work permit](#) that asylum-seekers need to work legally in the United States. In most cases, asylum-seekers can apply for an EAD 150 days after submitting their asylum application.

USCIS:

[U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services](#) is the USCIS is the government agency that oversees some aspects of immigration to the United States.

DHS

[Department of Homeland Security](#)

ICE

[U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement](#)

CBP

[U.S. Customs and Border Protection](#)

I589

The [i589](#) is the document used by most asylum-seekers to apply for asylum.

APPENDIX 2: CONSIDERATIONS FOR SHARED LIVING

These guidelines are designed for the person(s) within the congregational team who will physically host the asylum-seeker in their home.

As you begin to prepare for your guest, it's important to be aware of your expectations. Any time an additional person joins a household, it changes our patterns and rhythms. We each come with our own preferences, habits, and customs. As we blend our lives for a short or long time, we will come up against our differences and will need to figure out together how to adapt.

Sometimes it can be startling how reactive we feel about small changes in our living space, even when we know that such changes are inevitable when we invite an asylum-seeker to share that space. The questions here are designed to provoke your reflection *before your guest arrives*, so you can observe your own responses and consider what they tell you about both your conscious and unconscious expectations. Thinking carefully about preferences (such as relative neatness) versus *requirements* (such as no smoking in the house) will help you come up with guidelines while encouraging your own capacity to be flexible and resilient.

After you've thought about the topics and questions below, please take some time to outline your needs and guidelines for shared living. Follow the topics we've listed, even if only to say that you're unconcerned about that element. Feel free to add other things that have occurred to you. We encourage you to be honest with yourself about what feels truly non-negotiable or flexible. Being clear and up-front can make all the difference in making your hosting experience harmonious and happy for all involved. Bring your list to the core support team to hear their thoughts or responses.

We'll ask you to share your guidelines with us in preparation for receiving your guest. If there's something we think needs clarifying or more consideration, we'll offer suggestions. These guidelines will be shared with your guest as

we finalize the match. Your guest may have elements they'd like to add or clarify as well. Once complete, we hope the guidelines will help you all be on the same page as you begin living together. Consider them a "living document" that will need to be revisited, reflected upon, and possibly revised as time goes on and they are put into practice with your guest.

Privacy and personal space

Consider the usual rhythm of your weekdays and weekends: when you usually leave for work and return, when others in the house are home or out, how you're used to coming together for social or meal time and when you prefer to be quiet or alone. Write out a general week-in-your-life.

Are there elements of this rhythm that you'd like your guest to know about? Are there disruptions to this rhythm that would particularly bother you, such as music playing early or late in the day, or phone conversations happening in common space?

Household chores

Consider the basic tasks that help your house run smoothly: taking out the garbage and recycling, sweeping the kitchen floor, cleaning the common use spaces, and so on.

Are there chores that will need to increase in frequency with another person living in the home? Are there weekly chores that would be particularly helpful if your guest were able and willing to take them on? If there are chores that may be unfamiliar to your guest (such as separating out recyclables), are you able to be patient and flexible during the learning curve? While typical house-mate chores are fine, it's important to be clear that the guest is not doing chores in exchange for housing.

Neatness and cleaning up

Think about the ways that you and others in your household use the common spaces (kitchen, living room, entryways, dining room or other

eating space, shared bathrooms). We all have different needs for neatness, and if you live with a partner, child, or roommate you already know how to negotiate these differences!

Do you or others tend to leave some of your things in the common living area (books, shoes, coffee cups...)? If you do not, how important is it to you that the common area be kept free of personal items? If you do, would you be comfortable having your guest do the same?

Are you comfortable letting others know when a space feels too chaotic and needs to be neatened up again?

Are you able and willing to leave the neatness or messiness of your guest's bedroom up to your guest?

Are there rules you would like to have followed even in a private bedroom room, such as not accumulating dirty dishes there?

If you or others will be sharing a bathroom with your guest, is it okay for personal items to be stored there, such as makeup and toothbrushes?

Meals and food

What are your habits and practices around common meals? How often do you and your partner, family, or roommates have dinner together? Is it important to you that your guest(s) join you for these meals? Is it important to you that you have meals at times that are just with your partner? If so, are you comfortable letting your guest know this? Do people take turns cooking a meal for everyone?

Will you be most comfortable having all food be used communally, or setting aside some foods just for your guest or just for you and your family? What is your system for noting when you're running low on something (e.g., a grocery list)? Is this system easy for your guest to use or will it need to be adapted?

Friends of your guest

You may find that the asylum-seeker you're hosting already knows one or more people in your city. Over time, it's very likely (and

desirable!) that they will make new friends and contacts, and they may want to bring these friends home to visit.

How do you feel about your guest bringing a friend home to hang out in their room? In the common space? Cooking together and sharing a meal? How long can friends visit in the evenings? How do you feel about your guest having a friend stay overnight with them?

Substance use

How do you feel about cigarette smoking in the house, on an outside porch, or in the yard? How do you feel about alcohol use? How do you feel about marijuana use in the home, on an outside porch, or in the yard?

It is important to know that even in states that have legalized marijuana, as long as it is illegal on the federal level, it could cause legal problems for your guest if they should be caught in possession of it. Nevertheless, since your guest is an adult, they may make different decisions about using marijuana than what you might decide.

Safety considerations

Do you have preferences or concerns about when your guest goes out or comes home (e.g., very late at night)? Are there safety factors in your neighborhood or city that are especially important to convey to your guest in order to keep them safe? Do you need to inform your neighborhood watch of your new resident, so that your guest is not bothered?

COVID-19 considerations

Do you want your guest to be fully vaccinated and boosted if eligible? Are you ok with them having unvaccinated guests enter your home? Do you want their guests to wear masks in your home?

Are there other household norms or guidelines that are important to you?

As you try to consider your guest's perspective, what kinds of guidelines do you think will make them feel most welcome and supported in your home?

APPENDIX 3: SAMPLE LETTERS OF CONGREGATIONAL SUPPORT

Letter to Support Admittance into the U.S.

Congregation's Logo

Date

To Whom it May Concern:

The [xx] congregation is writing to express support for the humanitarian parole application of [asylum-seekers' names]. [Sponsor name], one of our members, has applied to be their sponsor. If they are granted humanitarian parole, we are prepared to bring them to [town and state], as part of our [name of program]. Through this program we will sponsor, house, financially support, and accompany them through the process of obtaining legal asylum.

We will provide them with a wide array of services to help establish them in our community. Of utmost priority will be arranging the much-needed [something to address the urgent need reason they need to be allowed into the U.S. on humanitarian parole such as medical care or therapy for processing significant trauma].

In addition to meeting their basic needs, we will arrange for pro-bono legal counsel, education and job training, transportation, childcare, and social connections to the community. We have an experienced volunteer team dedicated to serving asylum-seekers and several community partners who will lend support. We look forward to welcoming them into our program.

Thank you for your urgent consideration of their application.

Sincerely,

Letter in Support of Ankle Bracelet Removal

Congregation's Logo

Date

To Whom it May Concern:

The XX congregation is writing to outline the support we have committed to [asylum-seekers' names]. We plan to bring them to [name of town] as part of our XXX program. Through this program we will sponsor, house, financially support, and accompany them through the process of obtaining legal asylum.

We will provide them with a wide array of services to help establish them in our community. In addition to meeting their basic needs, we will arrange for legal counsel, education and job training, transportation, school enrollment and childcare, and social connections to the community. We have a dedicated volunteer team committed to serving asylum-seekers and several community partners who will lend support. We look forward to welcoming them into our program. Their new address in [state] will be:

We are also asking that you remove the ankle bracelets that were put on them when they entered with humanitarian parole. We are committed to helping them attend all legal and immigration appointments, making these bracelets unnecessary.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

APPENDIX 4: ASYLUM-SEEKER SUPPORT RESOURCES

This is not a comprehensive list, but rather links that have been compiled in response to the questions and concerns that have come up from hosts at this time.

- The [Understanding Solidarity Toolkit](#) is designed to support immigrant justice accompaniment volunteer groups in building brave spaces and encourage dialogue that acknowledges our identities, privileges, and oppressions in our work towards shaping collective liberation.
- The [Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project](#) (ASAP) works with asylum-seekers to build a more welcoming United States by providing legal and community support to its members. Membership is free and open to all asylum-seekers. The website includes valuable information on many aspects of the asylum process. They also have [updated information](#) on applying for a work permit.
- [UNHCR](#) provides a number of helpful resources and links related to the asylum process in the U.S.
- The [Immigrant Legal Resource Center](#) (ILRC) builds the capacity of immigration advocates to assist immigrants in their claims for asylum in order to provide more immigrants with a meaningful chance at justice.

At this extraordinary time in our nation's history, we are called to affirm our profound commitment to the fundamental principles of justice, equity and compassion, to truth and core values of American society.

In the face of looming threats to immigrants, Muslims, people of color, and the LGBTQ community and the rise of hate speech, harassment and hate crimes, we affirm our belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

In opposition to any steps to undermine the right of every citizen to vote or to turn back advances in access to health care and reproductive rights, we affirm our commitment to justice and compassion in human relations.

And against actions to weaken or eliminate initiatives to address the threat of climate change - actions that would threaten not only our country but the entire planet - we affirm our unyielding commitment to protect the interdependent web of all existence.

We will oppose any and all unjust government actions to deport, register, discriminate, or despoil.

As people of conscience, we declare our commitment to translate our values into action as we stand on the side of love with the most vulnerable among us.

We welcome and invite all to join in this commitment for justice.

- Declaration of Conscience, a joint statement by the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee; lovesresists.org

APPENDIX 5: RESOURCES ABOUT IMMIGRATION, POLICY DEVELOPMENTS, AND CENTRAL AMERICA

Current News and Events

[Catholic Legal Immigration Network Clinic Daily](#) helps you stay up to date with the latest immigration happenings. This daily news aggregate is your one-stop for breaking news on immigration law, policy, and enforcement.

[The Latin America Working Group \(LAWG\)](#) offers a weekly update that surveys news from Latin America, the border region, and new developments in immigration policy. They offer more in-depth analysis on immigration developments and have toolkits on how to take action. Sign up for the update and read their blog.

Books

[Undocumented: How Immigration Became Illegal](#), by Aviva Chomsky (Beacon Press, 2014). This is an exploration of immigration law and the many ways it has changed through our nation's history, driven by the needs of the economy and by racism. *A four-session book discussion guide is available for this book from the UU College of Social Justice, for use by congregations or book groups (free).*

[Border Patrol Nation: Dispatches from the Frontlines of Homeland Security](#), by Todd Miller (City Lights Books, 2014)

[Empire of Borders: The Expanse of the Border Around the World](#), by Todd Miller (Verso, 2019).

[Grabbing Power: The New Struggles for Land, Food and Democracy in Northern Honduras](#), by Tanya M. Kerksen (Food First Books/Institute for Food and Development Policy, 2013). *This analysis of the struggle for land and human rights in the Aguan Valley offers insight into the U.S. immigration crisis from the perspective of those who are fighting for the right to remain safely at home in their own country.*

Videos and Multimedia

[This is a multi-media exploration](#) of the rise of immigrant detention in the United States over

the past forty years. Produced in September 2019, it is an excellent resource for helping your community or congregation understand how we have come to depend so much on imprisoning people for migrating.

[Who Is Dayani Cristal?](#) Spurred by the body of an unidentified migrant found in the Arizona border desert, Gael Garcia Bernal and Marc Silver embed themselves among migrants making the perilous journey north. This film is an excellent resource for helping people understand the driving factors for migration from Central America and how high the stakes are for them. *A brief film discussion guide is available from the UU College of Social Justice (free).*

[Harvest of Empire](#) This documentary reviews four centuries of colonialism and American expansion, grounding the rise of poverty and violence in Latin America to the history that drives it and the immigration that arises from it. *A brief film discussion guide is available from the UU College of Social Justice (free).*

“ Danos un corazon grande para amar
Danos un corazon fuerte para luchar.
Pueblos nuevos, creadores de la historia,
constructores de nueva humanidad.
Pueblos nuevos que viven la existencia
como riesgo de un largo caminar.

Give us a heart large enough to love, Give
us a heart strong enough to struggle. New
people, creators of history, builders of a
new humanity— New people who live their
existence as though for the risk of a
long journey. ”

– Juan Antonio Espinosa,
in *Las Voces del Camino*

APPENDIX 6: ORGANIZE! CHALLENGING UNJUST IMMIGRATION SYSTEMS

Some people host asylum-seekers after having been involved in immigrant justice organizing and activism and some want to get involved in activism as a result of their hosting experience. There is a great need for changing broader structures and policies that have created harm for immigrants and asylum-seekers who are now a part of our lives. Below are resources to assist with your activism.

Immigrant-led Organizations

There has long been a powerful tradition of immigrant-led organizing in the United States. In these dangerous times, many grassroots groups which center the experiences of directly-impacted people continue to lead the movement for change. There may also be groups in your area designed for allies to follow the leadership of those most impacted. Here are a few national organizations that also have local chapters:

Mijente

[Mijente](#) is a national hub for Latinx and Chicanx organizing, using a hybrid offline and online platform to create a political home that brings together leadership, advocacy, culture and media to spark the culture and policy change we need. Mijente is not just Pro-Latinx, but pro-Black, pro-woman, pro-queer, pro-poor because our community is all that and more.

United We Dream

[United We Dream](#) transforms fear into finding your voice. We empower people to develop their leadership, their organizing skills, and to develop our own campaigns to fight for justice and dignity for immigrants and all people. This is achieved through immigrant youth-led campaigns at the local, state, and federal level.

Movimiento Cosecha

[Cosecha](#) is a nonviolent movement fighting for permanent protection, dignity, and respect for the 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States. Committed to winning real victories for our community, Cosecha believes in using non-cooperation to leverage the power

of immigrant labor and consumption and force a meaningful shift in public opinion.

National Domestic Workers Alliance

[NDWA](#) works for respect, recognition, and inclusion in labor protections for domestic workers, the majority of whom are immigrants and women of color.

General Activism for Immigrant Justice

[Love Resists](#) offers a variety of resources for faith communities to disrupt criminalization, including the violence of immigration detention and deportation. This [congregational action guide](#) (pdf) can help faith groups get started in exploring and committing to strategies for expanding sanctuary and solidarity.

The [#WelcomeWithDignity Campaign](#) is committed to transforming the way the United States receives and protects people forced to flee their homes to ensure they are treated humanely and fairly. To build a more just and truly humanitarian system we must reject the xenophobia and racism that motivated the cruel and dangerous policies of the past.

The [Interfaith Immigration Coalition](#) is made up of over 55 national, faith-based organizations brought together across many theological traditions with a common call to seek just policies that lift up the dignity of every individual. In partnership, they work to protect the rights, dignity, and safety of all refugees and migrants.

Sanctuary

[The Sanctuary Movement](#) A growing movement of both immigrant-led and allied faith communities doing what Congress and the Administration refuse to do: protect and stand with immigrants facing deportation.

[Interfaith Sanctuary Toolkit](#) – Designed to help congregations in discernment and practical steps when considering whether or not they are called to offer physical sanctuary for asylum-seekers.

[The Call to Sanctuary: How to Create Safety in Your Community](#) – a five-minute overview of how to create safety in your community locally, legally, at school and at church, narrated by many voices in the movement for immigrant rights, produced by Brave New Films.

Immigrant Rights

Helping to make sure people in immigrant and threatened communities know their rights, and what to do if they are targeted by a policing action, can be the difference between being safe and getting arrested.

[Know Your Rights: A Guide for Immigrants \(United We Dream\)](#) – Immigrants can use these resources to learn about their rights and express them in case they have an encounter with an immigration official.

[Informed Immigrant Resources 101](#) – Stay updated with the changes happening to America's immigration policies and enforcement.

[Informed Immigrant](#) – An exhaustive resource site from immigrant justice, rights and service organizations including information and recommendations on responding to new policies, resources for immigrants and allies and legal information on employment, DACA, the BRIDGE Act, and beyond.

Fight Deportations

Community support can help stop a deportation order, after someone has been detained.

[Anti-Deportations Toolkit \(Not1More\)](#) – Learn how to influence deportation proceedings through community campaigns and public advocacy for individuals with a deportation order.

End Abusive Detention

The holding and detention facilities for the U.S. immigration system are often inhumane and violent. Here are ways that supporters outside the system can improve conditions on the inside.

[Detention Watch Network](#) – a national coalition building power through collective advocacy, grassroots organizing, and strategic communications to abolish immigration detention in the United States. Their website contains many resources for learning and organizing, including through the #DefundHate Campaign.

[End Abusive Detention Toolkit \(pdf\)](#) (National Immigrant Justice Center) – A guide to organize and advocate for more humane detention centers through Immigration and Customs Enforcement contracts and inspections.

[ICE Death Watch Toolkit \(pdf\)](#) (National Immigrant Justice Center) – Over 160 people have died while in custody of Immigration and Customs Enforcement since 2003. Download these talking points and resources to advocate for a more humane ICE detention system.

[Starting a Visitation Program Webinar](#) – Watch this webinar from the Side with Love campaign on how to break down the isolation of immigration detention.

Stop the criminalization of providing aid to immigrants crossing the border

[No More Deaths](#) works to end death and suffering in the Mexico–US borderlands through civil initiative: people of conscience working openly and in community to uphold fundamental human rights. Their website offers an array of resources for learning and action, including their campaign to demonstrate that Humanitarian Aid Is Never a Crime.

Solidarity with border organizations

[This crowd-sourced google doc](#) offers a variety of ways to support border organizations through donations, amplification, and volunteer work, and also identifies related solidarity and accompaniment organizations to join in other regions, as well.